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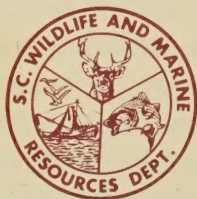
WOODS FOR WILDLIFE

AN AUTO TOUR ON THE EDGEFIELD RANGER DISTRICT

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EDGEFIELD RANGER DISTRICT **Sumter National Forest** South Carolina

Forest Service



Southern Region

United States Department of Agriculture

WELCOME

Welcome to the Edgefield Ranger District on your Sumter National Forest. This interesting tract of public land covers 62,000 acres in South Carolina's Piedmont. An auto tour through part of this area shows you national forest activities in the rolling hills in Edgefield and McCormick Counties.

The Forest Service, an agency in the U.S. Department of Agriculture, seeks to apply sound management practices that provide a variety of goods, services, and natural enjoyment for the American public. This is how we follow the Forest Service moto "Caring For The Land and Serving People." This brochure will guide you on a mini-tour of the Edgefield Ranger District, highlighting wildlife habitat management activities on your national forest. Habitat is simply the place in which an animal or plant lives.

This tour is a cooperative project of the Forest Service, National Wild Turkey Federation, and South Carolina Wildlife and Marine Resources Department.

HOW TO USE THIS BROCHURE

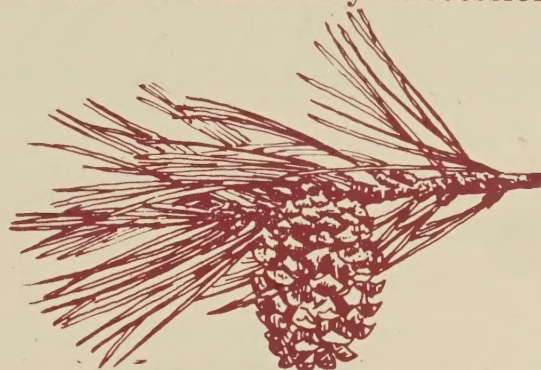
This tour begins southeast of Lick Fork Lake. The map on the back cover, a narrative description, and roadside signs will guide you on a 25-mile tour. You will spend an interesting 2-1/2 hours and make 12 stops in this tour. The roadside signs will bear the same image as the front of this brochure. Arrows in the bottom right or left corner will direct you from one stop to the next. Numbers in the bottom right corner of each sign match the numbered stops described in this brochure. At some stops interpretive signs provide more information. Some sites offer an opportunity to get out of your car and walk down short trails.

Contact us if you have questions, need maps, or would like other information on other aspects of your national forests. Our office is at 321 Bacon Street (one block east of the main part of town, behind the municipal building). Our mailing address is P.O. Box 30, Edgefield, SC 29824; our telephone number is (803) 637-5396. Brochures for this tour can be picked up at the Edgefield Ranger Station, South Carolina Wildlife and Marine Resource Division, the National Wild Turkey Federation, the Edgefield Chamber of Commerce (Historical Society), the welcome center on I-20, Lick Fork Lake Recreational Area, and the Beaver Dam Rifle Range.

Be alert for a variety of wildlife and birds that make the Sumter National Forest their home. The forest provides them with breeding grounds and a stopping place (wintering grounds) along their migratory pathways. See the checklist at the back of this publication. It lists the most common birds in this area. Many people enjoy documenting the species they see, using a list like this one. You, too, might like to watch for birds as you travel through the forest and observe the different habitats that have been created.

Getting to Stop 1. From the Square in downtown Edgefield (going north) turn left onto Penn Street. This takes you to the right into Buncombe Street. Drive down Buncombe to the bypass for SC 25. Cross over the SC 25 bypass and watch for signs that will lead you onto SC 34. From this junction go 6.6 miles to State Road 317. Turn right and go 1.1 miles to SC 52. Turn left and go 0.4 mile to Forest Service Road 634. Turn right onto 634; after 0.4 mile go to the right and, in another 0.4 mile, you will be at Stop 1. Road 634 will be marked with directional tour signs. This is a gravel road so please drive carefully.

STOP 1 — Southern Yellow Pine Early Succession Habitat



New stands of southern yellow pines can be regenerated by natural or artificial methods. This stop demonstrates a natural method called seed tree regeneration. The district sold most of the merchantable trees in 1989, for use in lumber and other products. However the forest retains about 10 to 16 large pines per acre to produce seed to start these new stands. When an adequate number of new seedlings are growing, the seed trees will be marked and sold. Seedbed preparation accomplished by drum chopping and burning occurred in 1990.

Wildlife seeding of skid trails and loading decks was done in 1990, to provide additional food and cover. Live trees were killed and existing dead trees were left to create snags for woodpecker homes and hawk perches. Watch for these birds so that you can check them off on your list. Some oaks have been left to produce acorns (hard mast) for wildlife food, and hollow den trees to provide homes for animals such as racoons and opossums.



After the young seedlings (look to your right) started growing, the seed trees were harvested in the winter of 1990–91. Notice the young hardwoods growing in the new stand. Compare it to the stand to your left, which shows a younger stage of regeneration. What differences do you see?

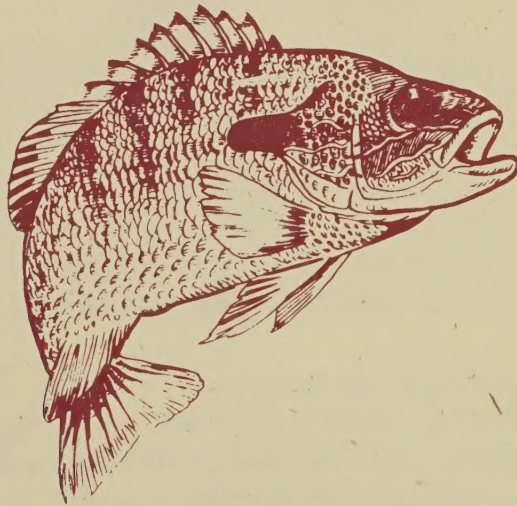
The next stop is 0.6 mile down the road. This is a downhill grade so please drive carefully.

STOP 2 — Stream Zone Management

Horn Creek forms the major drainage in this area. This winding stream provides a good example of a riparian zone — the area along any watercourse or body of water. This area is managed to enhance vegetation, wildlife, and recreation. Forest Service activities along the creek must meet management standards and guidelines for the Sumter National Forest. Hikers enjoy Horn Creek and other natural attractions on the Horn Creek Trail, which begins and ends at Lick Fork Lake Recreation Area.

Horn Creek also provides opportunities for fisheries habitat management. Native sport fish include redeye bass, bluegill, redbreast sunfish, and green sunfish. The Forest Service monitors water quality to determine if there are any impacts from the agency's management activities as well as those of the other landowners along the drainage.

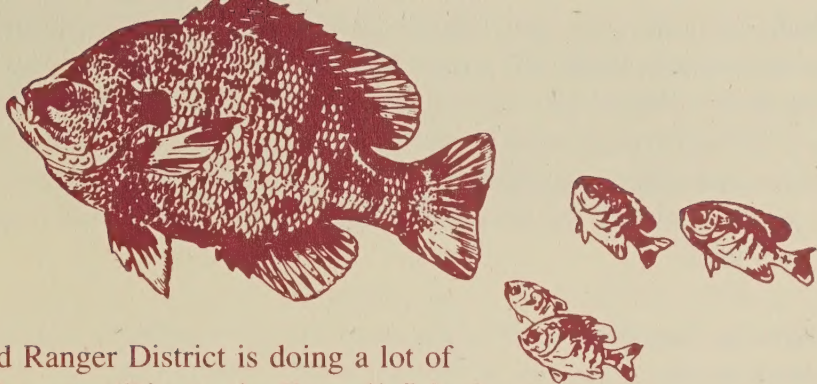
The next stop is 2 miles down the road at the entrance to Lick Fork Lake Recreation Area, on SC 263.



STOP 3 — Lick Fork Lake

Times were hard during the depression of the 1930's. Several million men were employed in the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) to provide employment and accomplish much needed work projects. The CCC built Lick Fork Lake Recreation Area to increase recreation opportunities.

A fee is charged to visit this 60-acre area, which provides opportunities for hiking, camping, fishing, picnicking, swimming, and boating (no outboards allowed). Many hunters camp at Lick Fork because it is in prime hunting grounds and provides a peaceful spot with great natural beauty. You might want to take the opportunity now to stretch your legs, walk on part of the trail, use the restrooms, have lunch here, or just "check out the area" for a future visit.



The Edgefield Ranger District is doing a lot of work under the new "Rise to the Future" fisheries initiative at Lick Fork. An intensive catfish improvement program was started in 1989, when the district began stocking fingerlings and installing habitat structures to provide nesting and shelter for the fish. Artificial feeders are used during warm weather to provide additional food. The numbers of largemouth bass and bream are also being monitored. Stocking of these fish occurs when there's a need. The district stocked sterile grass carp to provide a natural means of controlling aquatic weeds. The barrier-free pier provides fishing opportunities for individuals with physical impairments.

The next stop is 0.5 mile down the road.

STOP 4 — Red-cockaded Woodpecker Habitat Management

Notice the woodpecker hole midway up the pine tree that is marked with two silver bands. Years ago, red-cockaded woodpeckers (RCW) lived at this site. This small bird is on the Federal list of threatened and endangered species. Therefore, special efforts are being made to increase its numbers. No RCW's have been seen on this inactive/abandoned colony site since 1982. However, as you travel through the forest keep your eyes open for possible sightings, and record them on your bird list. Despite their name, they only have a bit of red on the underside of their head; their body has black and white stripes.



RCW management guidelines require that habitat management activities continue in the hope that RCW's may someday return. Although their habitat and population were badly depleted by Hurricane Hugo, large numbers still exist on the Francis Marion National Forest in eastern South Carolina. Their numbers there are, in part, the result of an intensive program to install artificial nesting-cavities in trees for the birds.

Prescribed fire is the principal management tool used to maintain RCW habitat. The district carefully burns this site every 3 years to control hardwoods that would block the bird's flights for feeding and cavity access. Burning also precludes buildup of fallen twigs, branches, weeds and other debris. This dry, dead material accounts for a lot of heavy fuel that could result in catastrophic wildfires. Controlled-burning projects enhance habitat conditions for many other animals, including deer, turkey, and quail.

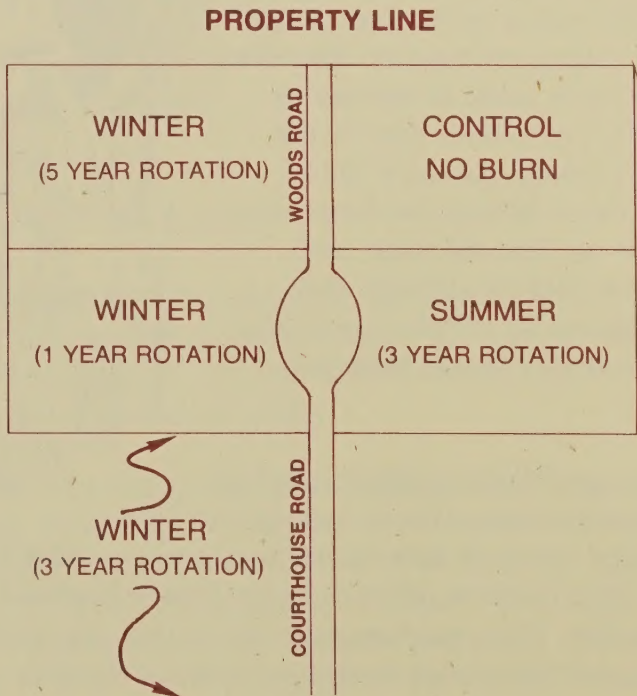
As you drive to Stop 6 note the bahiagrass along the road right-of-way. It is one of many plants we use to provide additional food for wildlife.

Proceed 0.1 mile and turn right onto Forest Service Road 641; drive 1.4 miles to the turnaround. This is a one-lane gravel road, so please drive carefully.

STOP 5 — Fire as a Habitat Management Tool



This prescribed-burning demonstration area features five, 4-acre plots, ringed with permanent fire lines. Three plots demonstrate results of winter/spring burning in pine sawtimber with 1-, 3-, and 5-year burning intervals. The fourth plot will be burned every 3 years during the summer. The last plot serves as an unburned control site to show what fire exclusion does to plant species composition and fuel buildup. The map below depicts the plots and their burning cycles.



When properly used, prescribed fire is one of the most cost-effective and efficient management tools available. Mother Nature has used fire to shape and maintain ecosystems for thousands of years, and many ecosystems rely on fire. Native Americans used fire as a management tool before settlers arrived. Human exclusion of fire in some fire-maintained ecosystems trigger massive, destructive fires such as those in Yellowstone National Park, in 1988.

The district carries out prescribed-burning projects on about 5,000 acres each year. These projects reduce hazardous fuels, prepare sites for seeding or planting, improve wildlife habitat, control competing vegetation, and enhance appearances.

Return to the paved road, SC 263, and turn right. Drive 1.3 miles to Highway 230 and turn right (north). Proceed 0.4 mile and turn left at the Westside fire station. Cross Highway 23 and proceed north on State Road 51 for 1.7 miles. Turn left (west) on County Road 628 (gravel surface) and go 0.4 mile.

STOP 6 — Wildlife Openings and Linear Strips



About 500 acres of permanent wildlife openings and linear strips form a major part of the district's wildlife habitat improvement program. The entire district is part of the State's Wildlife Management Area system.

Many of the openings and strips are managed by the South Carolina Wildlife and Marine Resource Division under a cooperative agreement with the Forest Service.

The Forest Service plants the wildlife openings with winter wheat and rye to provide winter forage. Permanent openings are generally located away from public roads to minimize human disturbance and reduce poaching.

The bicolor lespedeza to the left of the sign is a perennial legume. These plants produce abundant crops of nutritious seed that remain intact until late winter, when it is needed most by quail. Bicolor's cousin, Thumbergi lespedeza, is often substituted for bicolor in areas where deer browse heavily.

Continue 1.6 miles to an intersection and turn left (west). The next stop will be 0.3 miles from this intersection.

STOP 7 — Timber Management Provides Wildlife Habitat



Loblolly pines grow rapidly in South Carolina's piedmont. Behind the auto-tour sign for this stop you will see timber stands that were thinned in 1991. Thinning means taking out poorer quality, suppressed trees to provide more growing space for the remaining trees. The trees shown with dashed lines in the drawing represent the ones that would be thinned. This thinning also prepares the stands for a regeneration harvest that will probably take place 20 to 30 years from now, when the trees are 50 to 60 years old.

During the sale, the road was reopened and reconstructed to facilitate safe and efficient transportation. Careful coordination with timber management activities create new and improved open strips that are used for wildlife habitat after timber harvest and related cultural activities are completed. This road will be disked, seeded, fertilized, and mowed periodically. Bicolor lespedeza has also been planted here to provide food for quail.

Continue 1 mile to the next stop.

STOP 8 — Patchwork Landscape

Land ownership patterns in this area are like a giant patchwork quilt. Private and industrial timber holdings, farms and residences, and national forest land are scattered throughout this area. Different landowners have different management goals and use different types of management practices to achieve their goals. This part of the national forest is managed to produce trees that are relatively old and large to meet multiple-use goals.

Most private timber companies use shorter rotations that yield more cubic feet of wood. For example, the company owning the land to your right (north) cleared the land with a shear on the front of a large bulldozer. Then all the debris was pushed into windrows (long, narrow piles) for burning. This was followed by disking and planting. The company owning the land on your left (south) simply treated the site with herbicide to control hardwoods before planting. Contrast the results here with what you will see on the national forest at stop 9, about 0.7 mile down the road. You will see subtle as well as large-scale differences.

Continue 0.8 mile and look for a tour sign on your left (south) at the gated Forest Service road.

STOP 9 — Hardwood Management

Notice the desirable hardwood component (oak, hickory, and ash) growing in this pine stand, established in 1987. These mature, hardwood “leave strips” are scattered through pine-regeneration areas. The Forest Service developed this area to benefit wildlife species such as fox, turkey, squirrel and deer. The hardwood areas protect natural drainages, provide habitat diversity and natural travel corridors, and maintain hardwood mast producers such as nut-bearing trees. The component of young hardwoods interspersed with the pine ensures mast producers far into the future.



You may want to take a few minutes to walk down the closed road and examine the hardwood corridor and the mixed pine and hardwood regeneration. Compare this with what you saw at Stop 8. Can you see any turkey scratchings? Can you hear any squirrels?

Continue 1 mile to State Road 68 (Key Road) and turn right (north). Continue 1.5 miles and watch for a tour sign on your left at Forest Service road 614 (west).

STOP 10 — Price’s Bottom Fields

Drive to the end of Forest Service Road 614 to the fields at Price’s Bottom. This area is managed cooperatively with the State as noted for the area at Stop 6. State employees cultivate the large field to provide winter wheat as a wildlife food source. When the crop is particularly abundant, some of the seed is harvested to plant wildlife openings and regeneration areas that have been recently prescribed burned. Part of the field is planted with black walnut, crabapple, and shrub lespe-deza (bicolor or Thumbergi).

A canoe trail to Turkey Creek, one of the largest streams on the district, starts about 250 feet from here. Floating down Turkey Creek provides a good way to observe the great variety of riparian-zone vegetation. Large numbers of wood-cocks frequent this area during some winters. They’re probably attracted by the

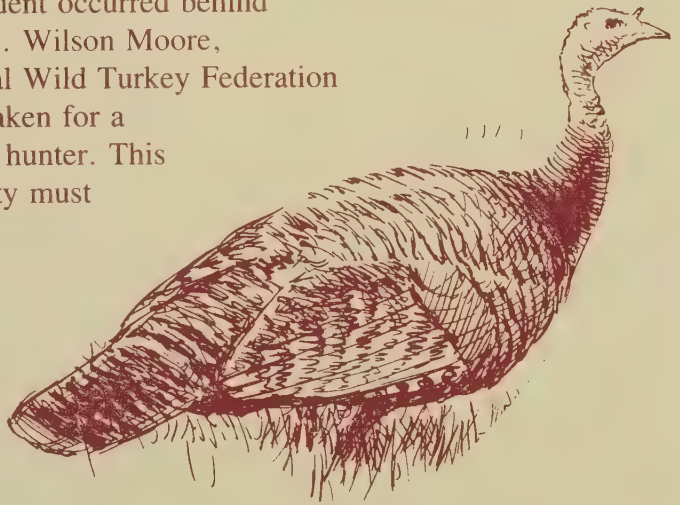


abundant brown wigglers (worms). Observers even report bald eagle sightings. You might want to take a minute to walk down the stairs to try to spot these birds, or at least see the beautiful white-trunked, majestic sycamore trees along the streambanks.

Return to State Road 68 and turn left (north). Continue 1.8 miles to Stop 11, which is just past the Key Bridge Wildlife Station on the right.)

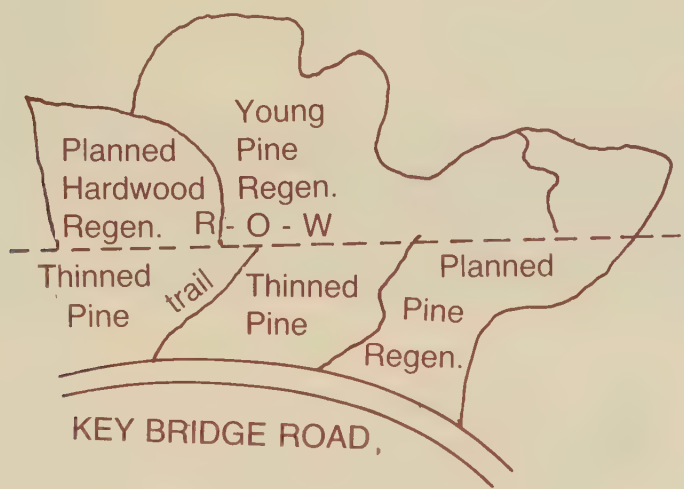
STOP 11 — Hunting Safety and R-O-W Habitat Management

A tragic turkey hunting accident occurred behind the sign at this stop, in 1984. Wilson Moore, former Pennsylvania National Wild Turkey Federation Chapter President, was mistaken for a turkey and killed by another hunter. This tragedy reminds us that safety must be first in all things that we do, whether it be driving to the market or hunting in your favorite woods.



The area behind the sign will be part of a large timber sale that will feature pine thinning and pine and hardwood regeneration cutting. Take a few minutes to walk 350 yards down the closed road to a gas pipeline right-of-way (R-O-W). You can see how the State's Wildlife and Marine Resources Division improved the wildlife habitat, especially for quail and turkey, on the utility R-O-W. After the harvest activities end, you will be able to see thinned pine along the blocked road and along the pipeline corridor to the south (your right). To the north and east (to your left, across, and down) of the pipeline a

hardwood regeneration area will be established. To the south, past the thinning, a pine regeneration area will be established on both sides of the pipeline. The sketch below shows these future management activities.



Across the highway is Key Bridge Hunt Camp, one of three hunt camps on the Edgefield Ranger District. Many hunters use these camps during deer and turkey hunting seasons. The State uses the adjacent work center for storage of equipment and materials needed in efforts to improve wildlife habitat on both national forest and surrounding private land.

Continue 2.7 miles on Key Road to Highway 283, and turn right (east) on 283 and go 3.4 miles to Turkey Road (Forest Service Road 621) on your right (south). Turn on to Turkey Road and go 0.6 mile.

STOP 12 — Beaver Dam Rifle Range

This site offers the only public shooting range in the Augusta/Edgefield area and thus receives heavy use year-round. Edgefield County and the State Wildlife and Marine Resource Division helped build the range in 1988. Students from Strom Thurmond High School Rifle Team help with maintenance.

State regulations prohibit target shooting on wildlife management area lands except in designated ranges. The Beaver Dam Rifle Range provides a safe location for shooters of all skill levels. Target holders provide opportunities for shooting at 25- and 100-yard distances.



This stop completes your tour of the Edgefield Ranger District. We hope you have enjoyed your visit and gained a deeper understanding of the wildlife habitat management practices employed by the Forest Service and the State's Wildlife and Marine Resource Division. From the small red-cockaded woodpecker to the large 10-point deer, habitat, food, and cover are all being provided on your national forests.

To return to Edgefield, turn right when leaving the rifle range parking area. Then turn right (east) when you reach SC Highway 283. When you reach U.S. Highway 25 you will again turn right for the short trip to Edgefield.

Thank you for your interest in *your* National Forest!!

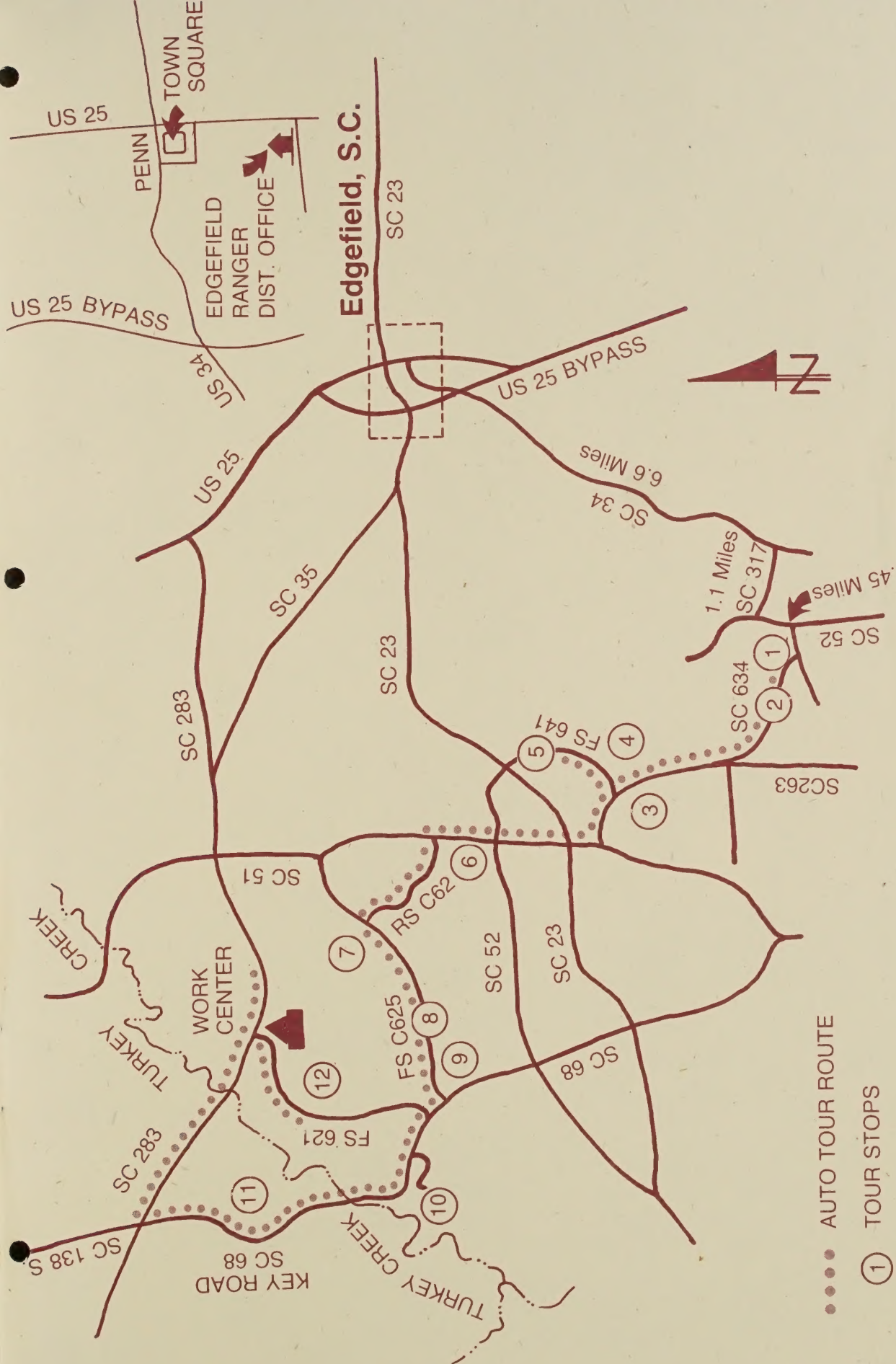
EDGEFIELD RANGER DISTRICT BIRD LIST

The district has a diverse range of ecological habitats. They serve the needs of a wide variety of bird life, both permanent residents and winter visitors. See how many of these birds you can see or hear while on the tour:

_____ turkey vulture
 _____ black vulture
 _____ sharp-shinned hawk*
 _____ red-tailed hawk
 _____ red-shouldered hawk
 _____ broad-winged hawk
 _____ bald eagle
 _____ northern harrier*
 _____ osprey
 _____ merlin*
 _____ American kestrel
 _____ common nighthawk
 _____ golden-crowned kinglet*
 _____ barn owl
 _____ screech owl
 _____ great horned owl
 _____ bobwhite
 _____ killdeer
 _____ prairie warbler
 _____ wild turkey
 _____ American woodcock
 _____ mourning dove
 _____ yellow-billed cuckoo
 _____ Chuck-will's-widow
 _____ golden-crowned kinglet*
 _____ ruby-crowned kinglet*
 _____ cedar waxwing
 _____ loggerhead shrike
 _____ white-eyed vireo
 _____ yellow-throated vireo
 _____ solitary vireo
 _____ red-eyed vireo
 _____ black-and-white warbler
 _____ prothonotary warbler
 _____ Swainson's warbler
 _____ orange-crowned warbler*
 _____ northern parula warbler
 _____ yellow warbler
 _____ yellow-rumped warbler
 _____ yellow-throated warbler
 _____ pine warbler
 _____ palm warbler*
 _____ Kentucky warbler
 _____ Louisiana waterthrush
 _____ common yellowthroat
 _____ yellow-breasted chat
 _____ hooded warbler
 _____ American redstart
 _____ whip-poor-will
 _____ bobwhite
 _____ ruby-throated hummingbird
 _____ belted kingfisher

_____ common (yellow-shafted) flicker
 _____ pileated woodpecker
 _____ red-bellied woodpecker
 _____ red-headed woodpecker
 _____ yellow-bellied sapsucker*
 _____ hairy woodpecker
 _____ downy woodpecker
 _____ red-cockaded woodpecker
 _____ eastern kingbird
 _____ great crested flycatcher
 _____ eastern phoebe
 _____ Acadian flycatcher
 _____ eastern wood pewee
 _____ red-winged blackbird
 _____ Carolina chickadee
 _____ summer tanager
 _____ northern cardinal
 _____ white-breasted nuthatch
 _____ red-breasted nuthatch*
 _____ brown-headed nuthatch
 _____ brown creeper*
 _____ house wren
 _____ winter wren*
 _____ Carolina wren
 _____ brown thrasher
 _____ American robin
 _____ wood thrush
 _____ hermit thrush
 _____ eastern bluebird
 _____ eastern meadowlark
 _____ red-winged blackbird
 _____ orchard oriole
 _____ scarlet tanager
 _____ summer tanager
 _____ northern cardinal
 _____ blue grosbeak*
 _____ purple finch*
 _____ pine siskin*
 _____ American goldfinch
 _____ rufous-sided towhee
 _____ Savannah sparrow*
 _____ grasshopper sparrow
 _____ Henslow's sparrow*
 _____ vesper sparrow*
 _____ Bachman's sparrow
 _____ chipping sparrow
 _____ white-throated sparrow*
 _____ swamp sparrow*

*Denotes winter visitors.



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